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Prophecy of Zephaniah

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A COMMENTARY

ON THE

Prophecy of Zephaniah

BY THE

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PREFACE.

In my blindness assistance has been rendered me in the preparation of this volume by the Rev. G. R. Brabham, now Stated Supply of the Second Church, Maryville, Tenn., Rev. W. H. Sanders, of Hope Chapel, Chambersburg, Pa., and in its passage through the press by my nephew Rev. S. McLanahan, pastor of the Presbyterian Church, of Lawrenceville, N. J. The roughness of expression observable in some verses or clauses is due to an endeavor to give a literal translation to the Hebrew text rather than to express in idiomatic English the thought of the prophet.

JAMES F. KENNEDY.

November 16, 1900.

INTRODUCTION.

The only information that we possess concerning the biography of Zephaniah is contained in the title of his prophecy, chap. 1: 1. This passage declares him to have borne the name of Zephaniah, records his genealogical table for four past generations and fixes the date of his prophecy within the days of Josiah King of Judah, B. C. 641-610.

I. HIS NAME.

The name of the author of this prophecy is written in Hebrew—Ts' Phanyah. Here the first letter of the Hebrew name is represented by the two English letters Ts, because there is no single letter exactly analogous to it in English. The name in Hebrew is pronounced in two syllables the last of which is accented. It was transferred into Greek under the form Sophonias and into Latin under the form Sophonia. The later form Zephaniah, has been adopted by the translators of the English Bible. This though inexact will be retained as the authorized English orthography.

THE SIGNIFICATION OF THE NAME.

The signification of the name is important in the case of a prophet because of his special relation to Jehovah and his work. The name Zephaniah consists of the verb "Tsaphan" and the abbreviated form of Jehovah "Jah."

It has generally been interpreted whom Jehovah hides or protects. Jerome says it describes him as a watchman "Speculator hominum et Dei cognitor" or, as Keil quotes him, "Speculator et arcanorum Dei cognitor." This is inconsistent with the established meaning of the verb "Tsaphan."

The name appears in Scripture as the personal designation of three individuals besides the prophet, but nothing is said of any of them that would identify him with the prophet.

II. THE BIOGRAPHY OF THE PROPHET.

No mention is made of him in the historical books of Scripture, but he may have been one of the prophets whom Josiah called together in the tenth year of his reign. This suggests the thought that he was a contemporary of Josiah and had been born about eight years before that monarch ascended the throne. This corresponds to the idea that the Hezekiah mentioned in chap. 1: 1, is Hezekiah king of Judah. The title "king of Judah," is not here applied to him and this name may refer to an entirely different person. It is true, however, that the parentage of Zephaniah is here traced back to Hezekiah as a well-known name in Jewish history. The genealogy contained in verse 1 is consistent with the theory that King Hezekiah is mentioned as his forefather, and was traced no farther because Hezekiah's ancestors were already well-known. The time between the beginning of Hezekiah's reign and the utterance of this prophecy was about one hundred years. In the genealogy of Zephaniah, five names are mentioned concluding with that of Hezekiah. If the century ascribed to the progenitors of Josiah be divided among those of Zephaniah there will be abundant time for five generations, allowing twenty

years to elapse between the birth of each individual from the 20th of Hezekiah to the 20th year of Zephaniah. It is probable therefore that the name applies to the same person in both genealogies and that Zephaniah's forefather, Amariah, was born in the earlier part of Hezekiah's life. Hezekiah is perhaps not mentioned as king because he had not as yet ascended the throne.

Recognizing the year 698 B. C. as the date of Hezekiah's death and Manasseh's succession to the throne, and the year 708 B. C. as the date of the birth of Amariah and assigning twenty years to each of the three following generations, which is a very likely average, we make the date of Zephaniah's birth 648 B. C. Zephaniah would then be seven years old when Josiah began to reign and perhaps nineteen or twenty years of age when he uttered this prophecy. Other similar hypotheses may readily be constructed respecting this genealogical table, but what has been said is sufficient to make it very probable that Hizkiah (1: 1) and Hezekiah the king were the same person, that Zephaniah was of noble birth, and that his life beginning in Manasseh's reign, might, if we adopt the usual estimate of 70 years as the ordinary measure of human life, have continued during the first half of the captivity, or may have ceased at any time after the utterance of his prophecy.

Another fact in his personal history is recorded in 1: 1. He was an inspired man. His prophecy was written and uttered under the influence of the spirit of God. He was selected and appointed by Jehovah and prepared for his work by the presence and power of the spirit of God. He certainly exercised his prophetic gift in this prophecy and it is entirely possible that he spake the word of the Lord on many other occasions of which we have no account.

III. DATE OF PROPHECY.

The date of this particular prophecy is not given specifically in the book itself, but must be inferred from several sources of information:

1.—The position of the book among the minor prophets indicates the opinion of the framers of the canon to be that it dated between the prophecies of Habakkuk in the later years of Manasseh's reign and the prophecy of Haggai in the second year of Darius the king.

2.—(1) The prophecy was received by Zephaniah in the days of Josiah the king 1: 1, and its date must therefore be confined between B. C. 641—B. C. 610. (2) The prophet predicts the destruction of the remnant of Baal 1: 4 which occurred between the 12th and 18th years of Josiah's reign.* (See II. Chron. 34: 3-9.) The prophecy was therefore uttered about the 12th year of Josiah's reign, in which year the reformation commenced. It may have been one of the powerful means inducing the revival in Judah in the year 623 B. C. and onward.

3.—The overthrow of Assyria and the desolation of its capital Nineveh, are foretold in 2: 13-15. The prophecy must have preceded its fulfilment which culminated first in the destruction of Nineveh about 625 B. C. and finally in the overthrow of the Assyrian empire 610-606 B. C.

The Assyrians had for several centuries possessed supreme power in Western Asia and held sway over the Medes, Babylonians, the Israelites, and the Phoenicians. Their policy was to rule the world by right of conquest. During the reigns of Hezekiah and Manasseh their armies had sought to reduce Judah and Philistia with a view to the future subjection of Egypt. Invasions were made into Judah in the reigns of both Hezekiah and Manasseh. Dur-

—* See Schaff on Zephaniah pages 3, 4 and 5.

ing Hezekiah's reign he was compelled to pay a tribute to them: (II Kings 18: 14), and afterwards they invested Jerusalem where the angel of the Lord slew their host: (II Kings 19: 35.) The captains of the host of the king of Assyria again invaded Judah in the reign of Manasseh and took him to Babylon: II. Chron. 33: 11. This indicated that Babylon was at that time a part of the Assyrian empire, but it soon declared its independence and sent Manasseh back to his own kingdom. This was the last interference of Assyria in the affairs of Judah, which never again acknowledged allegiance to Assyria. This was owing largely to the fact that the Assyrian empire was then crumbling to ruin. The Scyths had invaded Assyria about 639 B. C. and continued to ravage it for 28 years until 611 B. C. They first subdued the Medes from whom they obtained a tribute, but by their acts of oppression and injustice roused the Medes to resistance and were expelled from their country. The Scyths scattered over the land of Assyria and appropriated to themselves its herds and harvests.

The Medes improved this opportunity, and freed themselves from the dominion of the Assyrians and, especially, secured the removal of the capital of the empire to Carchemish on the Euphrates. According to Rawlinson (*Ancient Monarchies* II. 384) the Medes invaded Assyria as early as 634 B. C. and were defeated in battle by the king of Assyria. In this battle Phraortes the father of Cyaxares was slain, and his army withdrew from the country. The king of Assyria then sent Nabopolassar to Babylon with the hope of securing again the submission of that province and its help in securing the unity of the empire. But Nabopolassar was received most cordially by the Babylonians, who invited him to be their king. Having accepted this invitation he and Cyaxares united in the effort to destroy Nineveh. They conquered the city and the last king resident in Nineveh

burned himself and household in his palace. The names of two subsequent kings of Assyria are mentioned, Asshur-etiliani and Siusliarislukun (Greek, Sarakos). The date usually assigned to the fall of Nineveh is B. C. 625. Several commentators ascribe a later date to this event placing it near the close of Josiah's reign. The conquerers created another king of Assyria and removed the capital of the empire to Carchemish. Egypt was opposed to this change of the seat of power and preferred the entire dissolution of the empire. Pharaoh Necho followed the new king to Carchemish, which he conquered and held for four years B. C. 610—B. C. 606. (II. Chr. 35: 20 and II. Kings 23: 29.) On his passage thither he subdued the army of Judah and slew King Josiah 610 B. C. (II. Chr. 35: 20—II. Kings 23: 29.) We hear nothing more in sacred history of a king of Assyria. These facts show that the empire of Assyria fell about B. C. 610, and that Nineveh perished about the middle of Josiah's reign. Zephaniah prophesied before Nineveh fell.

4.—Another indication of the date of the prophecy is contained in the correspondence of the moral condition of Judah as described by Zephaniah with the scriptural account of the earlier years of Josiah's reign. Judah and Jerusalem needed to be purged and Josiah began this work in the 12th year of his reign. Tokens of idolatrous worship such as altars, images and groves abounded not only in Judah and Jerusalem, but also in Israel. There were houses of the Sodomites by the house of the Lord. Jewish children passed through the fire to Molech. There were workers with familiar spirits. The people refuse to receive correction and to return unto the Lord their God, Jer. 5: 3, 7: 28. Their transgressions were many and their backslidings increased, Jer. 5: 6. Their children committed adultery, Jer. 5: 7. They had a revolting and a

rebellious heart, Jer. 5: 23. They surpass the deeds of the wicked, Jer. 5: 28. The prophets prophesy falsely and the priests bear rule and the people love to have it so, Jer. 5: 31. The wicked prosper and they that deal treacherously are happy, Jer. 12: 1.

Zephaniah describes the condition of the people in the early years of King Josiah, with which the prophecy corresponds exactly, as follows: There was a remnant of Baal and also idolatrous worshippers with the Chemarim and the priests. They were also worshippers of the host of heaven and of both Jehovali and Malcham. There were apostates from Jehovah and those who did not inquire for him. The princes and the king's children and those who are clothed with strange apparel deserve to be punished. The merchants and silversmiths are dishonest. There are men that are settled on their lees. Judah is called in chapter 2 a nation not desired. In Chapter 3 Jerusalem is called an oppressing city, filthy and polluted. She was disobedient, incorrigible, faithless and wayward. Her princes are roaring lions and her judges evening wolves. Her prophets are light and treacherous persons and her priests are polluted and violent. They rose early and corrupted all their doings. They were proud because of their religious advantages and especially because of Mount Zion. This description by Zephaniah of the moral condition of the people corresponds with the historical account of the nation during the first half of Josiah's reign. We therefore infer that he uttered his prophecy as early as the 12th year of Josiah at which time the reformation commenced.

IV. ANALYSIS OF THE BOOK.

FIRST CHAPTER.

I. *The Title* (1: 1.)

II. *God will bring ruin upon the earth* (1: 2, 3.)

III. *Jehovah's hatred of the idolatry of Judah and his determination to punish* (1: 4-6.) Jehovah will soon commence the punishment of Judah and will cut off the worshippers of Baal and the Chemarim with the priests (v. 4), the worshippers of the stars and of Malcham (v. 5), the apostates from Jehovah and those that have never known him (v. 6).

IV. *The characteristics of the coming day of Jehovah's wrath* (1: 7-22). A day for the offering of Jehovah's prepared sacrifice for which his guests have been consecrated (v. 5), it shall bring punishment to all in high place and clad in strange apparel (v. 8), to those that leap on thresholds—the violent and deceitful (v. 9). then shall the noises from the fish gate and the second gate and from the hills, herald the overthrow of Jerusalem (v. 10); the merchants of Maktesh and they that bear silver shall be cut off (v. 11); Jehovah will punish them that do nothing, that ascribe indifference to him (v. 12), their goods and houses shall be spoiled, others shall enjoy the fruit of their labors (v. 13). Mighty men shall cry bitterly at the voice of that day (v. 14), a day of trouble and gloom (v. 15), of alarm against all fortified places (v. 16), of blindness and death (v. 17): treasures shall not prevent this punishment, the whole land shall be desolate and its inhabitants captives (v. 18).

SECOND CHAPTER.

V. *An exhortation to escape the wrath of God by repentance and seeking the Lord* (2: 1-3). A sinful nation is urged

to assemble itself before God (v. 1), the call is enforced by the speedy approach of the day of the Lord's wrath (v. 2); the meek of the earth are exhorted to seek the Lord that they may be hid in the day of wrath (v. 3).

VI. *Reasons for such penitent righteousness drawn from the future condition and punishment of heathen nations.*

(a). *Philistia* (vv. 4-7). Punishment upon the principal cities (v. 4), the land shall be utterly destroyed (v. 5) and be converted into a land of shepherds and flocks (v. 6), to be inhabited by the remnant of Judah, even in Ashkelon shall they lie down, for Jehovah will restore the captives of Judah (v. 7).

(b). *Moab and Ammon* (vv. 8-11). Jehovah was acquainted with their treatment of Israel when on the way to the promised land (v. 8), therefore Moab and Ammon shall be punished like Sodom and Gomorrah with terrible and perpetual desolation, an insignificant remnant of God's people shall spoil them and a mere remainder possess them (v. 9), all as a direct consequence of their treatment of the people of the Lord, Jehovah of hosts (v. 10). The Lord will act thus terribly because he will destroy all the gods of the earth and make every soul a worshipper of himself (v. 11).

(c). *Cush* (2: 12).

(d). *Assyria* (2: 13-15.) Jehovah shall punish the North—its chief country, Assyria and Nineveh its capital—by making them a desolation (v. 13), to be exhibited in their fields, ruined houses, thresholds and cedar work (v. 14): the capital shall be a resting place for beasts and despised by passers by v. 15).

THIRD CHAPTER.

VII. *Jerusalem, still sinful even in its highest officers, shall be punished and is exhorted to wait upon Jehovah, who*

will care for his penitent and widely dispersed suppliants. He will remove all shame from Judah and give to his own people all needed grace. Therefore let Judah rejoice both because of evils removed and grace bestowed, for Jehovah will relieve the distressed and restore the captive (3: 1-20).

(a). *The rebuke (3: 1-7).* Woe denounced on sinful Jerusalem (v. 1), as disobedient, incorrigible, unbelieving and estranged from God (v. 2), civil rulers are as roaring lions and evening wolves (v. 3), her religious leaders deceitful and unclean, violators of law (v. 4): Jehovah will treat each person as he deserves (v. 5), his punishment of sin illustrated by what he has done to the nations, their towers, streets, cities and inhabitants (v. 6.) Men are called to fear God and receive his word in order to the preservation of their homes. Surrounding nations already endure the punishment of their sins.

(b). *The summons (3: 8-10).* God calls on all to serve him because he will punish the wicked (v. 8), then the pure shall serve him with unanimity (v. 9), and from most distant regions his dispersed shall offer sacrifices (v. 10).

(c). *Promises of grace and deliverance (3: 11-15).* In the day of God's grace, Israel shall not be ashamed of their sins. God will remove the exultant proud (v. 11), but will leave in the midst a poor, afflicted and believing people (v. 12) who shall not sin, lie or deceive, for God shall supply them with food, rest, courage and safety (v. 13). The people of God in Israel—its capital and all its parts—are commanded to rejoice (v. 14) Jehovah's acts summed up in the removal of Israel's judgments, the clearing away of their enemies and his permanent, beneficent presence with his people (v. 15).

(d). *Comfort given (3: 16-18).* Jerusalem is called upon to be neither fearful nor idle (v. 16). Jehovah in the

midst of her will save and rejoice over her (v. 17) and will gather the penitent to a solemn assembly (v. 18).

(e). *Final promises* (3 : 19, 20). First, Jehovah will deliver his chosen people from oppression and affliction and unite them in one glorified body in all the earth (v. 19). Second, he will restore the captives to their own land of Judah and will give them a position of honor and praise in all the earth (v. 20).

EXPOSITION.

CHAPTER I.

I. THE TITLE.

VERSE I—*“Word of Yahweh which was unto Ts’phan-yah son of Cushî, son of G’dhalyah, son of A’maryah, son of Hhizqiah, in days of Yoshiahu son of Amon, king of Y’hudhah.”*

This title describes the following prophecy, first, as to its source and nature; second, as to the name and family of its human author; and, third, as to its date. The phrase “Word of Yahweh” (Jehovah) is not rendered definite by the use of the article. It describes the following book as similar in nature to the other revealed will of God and therefore certainly inspired. Inspiration is an influence exerted by the Spirit of God, which suggests truth, secures its proper enunciation to others, guards it from error, and produces the designed effects. God speaks sometimes by an audible voice to men, and always through men of his choice and through no others. Prophets are qualified for their work by God’s own Spirit, guided by his providence, assisted by his grace in the discharge of duty, and are sure to accomplish the end for which Jehovah sent them forth. Truth revealed by God to men as the rule of duty is embraced in “the word” of God. All true prophets speak with the same authority and enjoy the same high honor.

The fact of the special inspiration of the prophet is proved by the character of his own declarations, and by the miraculous signs which he exhibits so as to convince men, and especially his own generation, that what he says is the word of God. The process of inspiration is mysterious, and is here described as "Word of Jehovah which was unto Zephaniah." As a word expresses human thought so "Word of Jehovah" expresses the mind of God.—The verbal root of the word "Yahweh" or Jehovah is also the root of the word translated "was," and this suggests that the process of inspiration is in accordance with the entire nature of Jehovah. *Yahweh*, the original form of the word Jehovah, expresses, first, that the source of this word is the being who is, who was, who is to come,—the Creator of the Universe and the Covenant God of Israel.—Hebrew names are all significant. The names found in this verse have the following significations:—*Cushi*, a Cushite; *G'dhal-yah*, whom Jehovah has made great; *Amar-yah*, Jehovah has said; *Hhizqiah*, strength of Jehovah; *Yoshiahu*, Jehovah will save; *Amon*, architect, builder. On the name "*Ts'phuuyah*," (Zephaniah),* Dorathus and Epiphanius express the opinion that he was an Ephraimite, but this is uncertain tradition. The name perhaps described some fact connected with the birth of the prophet, and was given by the mother to the infant, upon his parentage as here described for four past generations. † There is no doubt about the fact that Zephaniah prophesied during the reign of king Josiah 641–610 B. C., and the probability is that he uttered the prophecy in the twelfth year of Josiah. According to chapter 2: 13 sq., where he predicts the destruction of the kingdom of Asshur and the city of Nineveh, the Assyrian empire was still in existence and Nineveh had not yet

* See Introduction page 5.

† See Introduction page 5.

fallen. The overthrow of Nineveh did not occur until 625 B. C. His description of the moral depravity of Judah corresponds with that of Jeremiah who commenced to prophesy in the thirteenth year of Josiah (Jer. 1: 2). From these facts we infer that he prophesied at least as early as B. C. 629, and was a powerful agent in securing the subsequent reformation. Keil and Delitzsch think that Zephaniah prophesied in the thirty-first year of Josiah's reign; the only question being whether it was the first or second half of that year. Ewald and others assign him to the first half of Josiah's reign. †

II. GOD WILL BRING RUIN UPON ALL THE EARTH.

CHAPTER 1: 2, 3.

(FOR SUMMARY SEE P. 12)

VERSE 2—*“To gather I will gather all from upon the face of the ground—a saying of Yahweh.”*

God will certainly punish sin, “the soul that sinneth it shall die,” (Ezek. 18: 4). The fulfillment of this threatening has been exemplified in all past history, and will continue to be endured while sin remains in the universe. Of this principle, Scripture furnishes us many illustrations. The punishment of sin by death is exhibited, not only in the experience of individuals, but also in that of great masses of men, and in the sufferings of Christ on the cross for the world. The announcement of this threatening has been made by God himself and through the agency of inspired men in many a generation. A comparison of verses 2 and 3 with the word of God to Adam (Gen. 2: 17 and 3: 17-19), and to Noah (Gen. 6: 7, 13, 17 and Gen. 7: 4, 21, 22, 23), will show that Zephaniah only repeats and confirms the original curse of sin as it applies

† See Introduction Page 5.

to all mankind. Jehovah has selected special occasions when their danger should be declared to sinful men; and directed his servants to improve such occasions by uttering the curse of sin upon the whole world in similar language; and the same thoughts will be repeated in the ears of men until the day of judgement.—The verbs which introduce the sentence possess almost similar radicals. One is infinitive and the other a future. This arrangement is designed to express emphasis. The original signification of the initial verb is that of gathering, as when one gathers rubbish from a field in order to burn it. This gathering conveys the idea of punishment as the end for which the gathering will be made, and the addition of another verb of almost similar radicals, expresses the intensity of the infliction. The severe and utter destruction to which our attention is directed, is that which followed and characterized the rise of the Chaldean empire; whose progress was attended by extreme suffering, involving loss of property, captivity and death. The whole earth would be subject to this experience and even the Chaldeans by whose agency the prophecy was partially fulfilled.—The word translated “the ground” is identical with that used when God is said to have made Adam of it (Gen. 2: 17 and 3: 17, 19). It should not be here confined to the land of Palestine. The word often describes the earth as the scene of God’s necessary punishment of sin.

VERSE 3—“*I will gather man and beast; I will gather bird of the heavens and fishes of the sea and the stumbling blocks with the wicked, and cut off the man from upon the face of the ground;—a saying of Yahweh.*”

Both the second and third verses imply the entire sovereignty of Jehovah and the necessary and universal punishment of sin.—The prophet in this verse points to

“man” as the object of punishment. Man was created in the image of God and is a responsible creature. The penalty of sin is destruction.—The animal kingdom, which is here described in three great divisions, is declared to be involved in man’s punishment. “Beast”, “bird” and “fishes” shall all perish because of their relation to man. Such things as drought, famine, malaria, pestilence, war, forcibly exhibit the dreadful consequences that result from the relation between animals and man as their head and representative. —The word rendered “stumbling-blocks” embraces every thing which may be a cause of offense through the influence of which men are led into the commission of sin. Among these, idols may especially be mentioned because an idol is a senseless block of wood or stone over which rational man plunges into ruin.—“Man” is mentioned a second time in this verse as the object of punishment. The prophecy describes the Chaldean invasion of the then known world. Babylon would soon obtain supreme control, and would act as the agent of Jehovah in the infliction of the prescribed penalty. They are spared, though but men themselves, because used as Jehovah’s instrument in the infliction of the future punishment.

III. JEHOVAH’S HATRED OF THE IDOLATRY OF JUDAH AND AND HIS DETERMINATION TO PUNISH IT.

CHAPTER I: 4-6.

(FOR SUMMARY SEE P. 12).

VERSE 4—“*And stretch out my hand upon Judah, and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and cut off, to wit, the remnant of Baal from this place, to wit, the name of the Chemarim with the priests.*”

The first object of the divine wrath included in the

preceding threat of punishment, is "Judah,"—especially all the inhabitants of its capital city, "Jerusalem." Judah had been God's chosen people, they had his personal presence in the tabernacle and the temple, his written law was in their hands, he had led them along through all their past history, his Son should be their Messiah. The blessings which Judah had enjoyed only increased its guilt in rejecting the service of Jehovah. Their practice of idolatry in the days of Manasseh and Amon had rendered the punishment of Judah so necessary that it could not be remitted.—Though king Josiah had commenced his efforts at reform yet idolatry prevailed; consequently the "hand" of Jehovah was already at work preparing appropriate punishment. Man has a hand with which he executes his will. All the agencies and implements by which he accomplishes his purposes are included in the figure of the hand which Jehovah stretches. Jehovah's hand outstretched is omnipotent, and will come in destructive contact with this idolatry of both land and city in his own time and in his own way. (So Jer. 51: 25, Ezek. 6: 14, 15 and 25: 13).—Of these the first mentioned is the "remnant of Baal" Baal was the supreme God of the Phoenicians and was also recognized as divine by other surrounding nations. The Chaldean name Bel probably designates the same God. Indications of the idolatrous worship of Baal are frequent in the Scriptures of the Old Testament.—(Judges 2: 12, I Kings 11: 7, 16, 31 and 18: 19, II Kings 10: 19 and 21: 31, II Chron. 28: 2). Jerusalem had always been the religious capital of Judah, and the worshippers of Baal had made their way into the temple and held a place in its religious service. This Jehovah will no longer endure. Every thing employed in idol-worship should be cut off—the images, the instruments and vessels used in the service and the worshippers.—

This cleansing process should be so thorough that the whole "remnant" of Baal should be destroyed so that every one who bore the name of "the Chemarim" should perish together with "the priests." The cleansing work of king Josiah described in II Kings 23: 5, corresponds exactly with the language of the prophet. They were to destroy the very name of the Chemarim whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in Judah and Jerusalem. King Josiah commenced his work of purification in the temple and city of Jerusalem in the twelfth year of his reign, and the language of the prophet implies that Jerusalem was the place where he delivered his message. Zephaniah was not known as a prophet when the book of the law was found. An appeal was made by the king to the prophetess Huldah for instruction. After Huldah had revealed to the king the coming punishment of Judah, God raised up Zephaniah to define the nature and extent of the penalty. The record of Josiah's acts shows that he attempted to fulfil the word of God in Judah and in all Israel. The origin of the word Chemarim is uncertain. The priests in this verse are probably priests of Baal and will for that reason be cut off.

VERSE 5—*"And, to wit, those worshipping upon the roofs unto the host of the heaven; and, to wit, those worshipping, those swearing unto Yahweh and those swearing by Malcham."*

Two classes of worshippers are described in this verse. The first consists of star-worshippers. They worshipped the sun, moon, planets and stars. The phrase "host of the heavens" describes the heavenly bodies as a living army, occupying the visible heavens and exerting an irresistible influence upon the affairs of men. This worship was rendered on the housetops because the flat roofs furnished a

retired and a convenient place, which seemed nearer heaven. Here they worshipped either the whole host, or some star as the material representative of a particular divinity,—as the star of the God Chiun or Remphan (Amos 5: 26, Acts 7: 43).—The second class of worshippers are those who, professing reverence for the true God, attempt to combine it with the service of idols. This they do by swearing by both “Yahweh” (Jehovah) and “Malcham,” translated “their king.” Milcom is mentioned in I Kings 11: 5, as the God of the children of Ammon. “Malcham” does not, however, present the same orthography and for this reason is interpreted by some “their king.” It presents the appearance of an appellative noun signifying “their king.”—An oath implies the possession of divine attributes by him in whose name it is taken (see Deut. 5: 11 and 6: 13). There is but one living and true God. Some render divine honours both to Jehovah and to Malcham. Whether men introduced the names both of Jehovah and Malcham into the same oath or swore sometimes by one name and sometimes by another any such recognition of an idol as God was sinful.

VERSE 6—“*And, to wit, those who are turned back from after Yahweh, and who have not sought nor inquired after Yahweh.*”

Two other classes of persons are here described as objects of divine wrath. First, apostates, or those who, having confessed themselves servants of the God of Israel, now have abandoned his service, the second class comprehend either Gentiles or atheists who do not even inquire after Jehovah.

IV. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMING DAY OF
JEHOVAH'S WRATH. CHAPTER I: 7-23.

(FOR SUMMARY SEE P. 12)

VERSE 7—*“Be silent before Lord Yahweh; for a day of Yahweh is at hand, for Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests.”*

The first great duty here inculcated is that of silence. This expresses reverential submission to Jehovah as their Creator and consequently their sovereign. (See my Commentary on Habakkuk 2: 20). They are his creatures and his covenant people. They should recognize his supreme authority by the absence of their complaints against his law, their personal reverence for Jehovah and their earnest efforts to obey his will. This is to the creature the only proper mode of behavior.—The reason assigned is that “a day of Jehovah” is at hand. A day of Jehovah is one in which his presence is manifested and his wonderful attributes exemplified and illustrated in his dealings with men. (See Isa. 13: 6, 9 and Joel 1: 15, &c.) Unexpected and unbelieved in, that day will certainly come soon.—Jehovah has already made all necessary preparations for a sacrifice. He has made ready “the sacrifice, he has consecrated his guests.” (See Jer. 22: 7 and Joel 3: 9). This sacrifice is the Jewish nation, and those who are called to partake of the sacrificial feast are the Chaldeans. (See Keil and Delitzsch on Zeph. 1: 7). Making provision for the punishment of the sins of his people is an essential attribute of God's nature. There must be a sacrifice for sin. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on the altar. The offerers partook of the flesh of the victim. Here Jehovah has given all authority to his invited guests. The animals may be included in the number of his guests, as they

assisted in the execution of the punishment of sin. (See Deut. 28: 26 and Ezek. 39: 17). The day of Jehovah's wrath is sometimes the day of his mercy and grace.

VERSE 8—*“And it (shall) be in a day of Yahweh's sacrifice, and I punish upon the princes and upon the king's sons, and upon all putting on strange clothing.”*

The first element in the description of the punishment which Jehovah should inflict, is that it should be in “a day of sacrifice.” In that day Jehovah will accept the chastisement and the sacrifice which his sovereignty required.—At that time Jehovah will punish those who most probably may expect impunity, including “princes,” “king's sons” and those who wear “strange clothing;” these classes are especially pointed out as objects of punishment because they were the most conspicuous among the citizens of Judah in the violation of law. “The princes were persons appointed to be rulers over various organizations of people, and were heads over thousands, over hundreds, over fifties, over tens, &c. “The king's sons” describe children belonging to the household of the king and his immediate relatives. The third class includes those who wear “strange” apparel, belonging either to foreign nations or to those who imitate them in their clothing.

VERSE 9—*“And punish upon every one leaping upon the threshold in that day, those filling the house of their master with violence and deceit.”*

Some interpreters regard the two clauses of this verse as referring to two classes of sinners. The fact that there is no conjunction between them renders it probable that both clauses refer to the same class of persons. They are described first as those who, by “leaping upon the threshold” exhibit their reverence for an idol into whose temple

they enter. The origin of this custom in Philistia is mentioned in 1 Sam. 7: 4, 5. They are described, secondly, as those who "fill the house" of their lord to whom they have fered this reverence with the fruits of "violence" and "deceit." They thus combine the worship of their god with the violation of law. Both reverence for idols and lawless conduct separate men from Jehovah.

VERSE 10—*"And there shall be in that day a saying of Yahuveh, a voice of a cry from the gate of the fishes, and a wail from the second (or Mishneh) and a great crash from the hills."*

Again claiming to be a special messenger of Jehovah, the prophet predicts the peculiar experience of Jerusalem. The first thing mentioned is "the voice of a cry from the fish-gate." This gate, according to Jerome, was in the northern wall, through which Nebuchadnezzar's army gained admission to the city. This opinion is sustained by Robinson (Pal. II. 118). It gained its name from the fact that it was the principal market for the fish which came from the Jordan, the lake of Galilee and the Mediterranean sea. It probably offered a market for both the city and the surrounding country. In this day the voice here foretold is not that of the ordinary fish-market but the shout of the conqueror and the cry of the conquered as the Chaldeans enter the city.—Poole thinks that the fish-gate was on the west side of the city. The second element in the description is the wailing "from the second (or Mishneh)." This is interpreted by some to be a second gate through which the conquering army took possession of the larger part of the city. Others think it refers to the western or second part of the city. Nehemiah 11: 9 refers to a second division of the city, which bore the name of the second city. His use of the term is a strong endorsement of its signification here. Ewald renders it Neustadt or "Newtown." It

has been described as Acra, one of the elevations on which the city is built. It is the name of that part of the city in which the prophetess Huldah lived. (II Kings 22: 14, II Chron. 34: 22).—The third element is the “great crash from the hills.” These are the hills upon which the city is built. The crashing is the destruction of the city built on the hills within the walls, such as Zion and Moriah, and the hills surrounding the city such as Olivet, Goath and Gareb. (Jer. 31: 39). This verse describes the progress of the Chaldeans in the conquest of the city. Calvin regards the description in this verse as progressive beginning with the cry at the fish-gate, followed by a wailing at the second and concluded with a great crash from the hills.

VERSE II—“*Wail, ye inhabitants of the Mortar, for every people of Canaan is destroyed, all bearers of silver are cut off.*”

“Wailing” is a token of distress and anguish which shall be the expression of the punishment of the citizens of Jerusalem; which is here called “Maktesh” (i. e., the Mortar,) because as the drugs are reduced to powder in a mortar under a pestle, so the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall perish. (See also Prov. 27: 22). In accordance with this interpretation Jeremiah describes Babylon as a hammer or pestle by the use of which this pulverization shall be accomplished. Others interpret Maktesh to mean a place of merchandise in which the great aim of the inhabitants is to gain advantage over their neighbors. As an appellation, the word may apply either to the whole city or to one of its valleys where people gathered for the sale of their goods. Keil supposes the mortar to be the depression which runs south between Acra on the west and Bezetha and Moriah on the east, called by Josephus “the Cheese-makers’ Valley,” and by the present inhabitants *et Wad* and the Mill valley. As inhabitants either of this city or a part of it, they are

called upon to wail; their life and work must lead to sorrow. Attention is specially directed to two reasons why they should mourn. The first is that "every people of Canaan is destroyed." Or, as some translate, the "people of merchandise" (Gesenius' Lexicon, see Isa. 2 : 3-8, Ezek. 17 : 4). meaning (1) a great concourse of buyers and sellers who gathered there; or (2), especially the various tribes residing in the land of Canaan, who assemble there for purposes of trade and exchange. The latter were the original inhabitants of the land, who were expelled by the Israelites from a large part of it. Some were still to be found in the lowlands along the Mediterranean. The cities of Tyre, Sidon, Gaza, Gath Ekron, Ashdod and Aslikelon had had much intercourse with Jerusalem in Josiah's day and would suffer terribly by the overthrow of Jerusalem.—The second reason is that "the bearers of silver," i. e., the bankers and brokers, necessary elements in a mercantile community, who make unlawful gain by trade or usury, shall be cut off.

VERSE 12—"*And it shall be in that time I will search Jerusalem with lights, and punish upon the men settled upon their lees, those saying in their hearts Yahweh will not do good and will not do evil.*"

The prophet now portrays another feature in the description of the coming day of the wrath of God, which, was fulfilled in the conquest of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans and by the Romans under Titus. (See Keil and Delitzsch *in loco*). The season of punishment is described not merely as a day of twenty-four hours, but embraces all the time necessary for the examination and punishment of Jerusalem and Judea by Jehovah. Nothing which is a violation of his will, and no one who is a transgressor of his law, can escape his inspection. The most secret place is open to his all penetrating sight; omnipresence and omniscience are his essential attributes. The search will be thorough, and

specially directed to Jerusalem as the capital city of Judah and the chief city of Jehovah's worship. This inspection will certainly be accompanied by his punishment of transgressors, (including those who are ashamed of their sins or afraid of its punishment,) by personal affliction in mind, body, or estate.—These are said to be “settled upon their lees” like wine after the process of fermentation, and no longer giving token of a desire to obey Jehovah's will. Calvin mentions two classes as objects of punishment, namely: those hardened either (1) by their carelessness, or, (2) by their stupidity.—Seated “upon their lees”—with their limbs folded together beneath them,—they exhibit their indifference to true religion and their desire to enjoy their earthly treasure, creed, comfort or society. Besides this hardness of heart, they “say in their hearts,” even though they do not say it in words, that they do not recognize Jehovah as one who does either good or evil.

VERSE 13—*“And their wealth shall be for a booty and their houses for a desolation; and they build houses and shall not inhabit them, and plant vineyards and shall not drink their wine.”*

The prophet continues his description of the punishment that shall follow Jehovah's inspection of Jerusalem and which had already been announced by Moses in Deut. 28: 30. Their chastisements shall reach them through their possessions, which they expected to afford them comfort and peace. Strangers shall enjoy “their wealth,” consisting in riches, merchandise, food, and all domestic property, and thus their wealth shall enrich their enemies. Their “houses” shall be taken away from them. The very houses built with the expectation of occupying them.—Though they plant “vineyards” their enemies shall enjoy the wine which their labor hath produced. However much support, comfort and pleasure they had previously pos-

sessed, or on however strong a foundation they had built their hopes of prosperity, or however closely their plans were concealed from Jehovah, as they thought, their expectations shall be disappointed and their sin punished.

VERSE 14—*“Near is the great day of Yahweh; near and exceedingly speedy; a voice of a day of Yahweh,—the mighty one is there crying out bitterly.”*

This “day of Jehovah” in which he will exercise his attributes as God in covenant relations with the Jews, is especially “great” because it will exhibit marked tokens of his wisdom, holiness, justice and power. The nearness of its approach is not only distinctly uttered but repeated euphatically; and of course the nearer it approaches the more dreadful it becomes. Nothing shall retard its speed or prevent its sure arrival. This assurance is confirmed by the “voice” of the day itself which heralds its speedy approach. Henderson and others translate the word “voice” by “noise”; Keil and Delitzsch by an interjection “hear” or “hark,” but the usual translation suggests a personification of the day, which, like one in the deepest affliction, utters such cries and groans as imply extreme suffering endured by “the mighty one” crying there bitterly. His cries are occasioned by the assault and capture of the city and the slaughter of its inhabitants in which even the mighty man shall share.

VERSE 15—*“A day of outpouring is that day; a day of trouble and distress; a day of devastation and desolation; a day of darkness and gloom; a day of cloud and thick darkness.”*

In this and in the next verse the coming day is described in language which many critics say includes all the words by which the Hebrew designates coming sorrow. These terms with the exception of the first clause—which all the rest contribute to explain and enforce—are arranged in pairs in order to express the intensity of the punishment

to be endured. The first pair is found in Job 15: 24, the second in Job 30: 3 and 38: 27, the third in Joel 2: 2, the fourth in Dent. 4: 11. The day is first a day of judgement in special reference to the overflowing of Jehovah's anger against his chosen people in various ways. It would be the wrath of the same who had so recently punished Israel and who will judge the world at the last day. These very words open the old Latin hymn which describes the judgement, i. e. "Dies irae dies illa." The first pair of harms, "trouble and distress," includes suffering of mind and body, of weakness, defeat, separation from family, friends, city, and lands, of pain and death.

The second pair "devastation and desolation," describes a day in which lands and dwellings should be rendered useless because unproductive and uninhabitable. The third pair "darkness and gloom," describes a day in which sufficient light is absent and in which such obscurity prevails that their enemies are hidden from them while they are more readily exposed to attack and less able to resist it. Its gloom is increasing and will soon be impenetrable. The last pair "cloud and thick darkness," describes a day in which speedily approaching storm and tempest are threatened besides the darkness. Thick darkness is but one word in Hebrew and expresses more decided gloom than that mentioned in the preceding pair.

VERSE 16—"A day of trumpet and din against the fortified cities and against the lofty towers."

The fifth pair of terrors includes the outcry of the trumpet calling to battle and also the din proceeding from the actual assault of an invading host. These are sources of terror to all fortified cities and high towers. Neither walls nor towers shall be able to withstand their attack, and the cities and towers of Judah shall share in the punishment of Jerusalem.

VERSE 17—*“And I will bring distress upon man, and they walk like the blind because they have sinned against Yahweh and their blood is poured out like the dust and their flesh like the dung.”*

“Distress” shall fall on men as if the hand of Jehovah brought it and the reason of its infliction is that men have broken God’s law. This distress shall consist of a trouble which shall make their lives bitter, the loss of sight like the blind (Deut. 28: 29) that be in darkness as to the right way, exposed to danger and death, unable to do their own work, secure their own happiness or protect themselves from evil. The second element in this distress is that when they die “their blood,” whose shedding is the cause of death, shall be cast out as impure and unclean. Their flesh shall be strewn upon the ground as dung.

VERSE 18—*“Even their silver, even their gold shall not be able to deliver them in a day of wrath of Yahweh, by a fire of his indignation shall the whole land be devoured; for a complete even a sudden end shall he make of all inhabitants of the land.”*

The precious metals which they have treasured up cannot satisfy the demands which shall be made on them. (See Prov. 11: 4 and Ecc. 5: 13.) In his own time and way Jehovah will inflict the threatened punishment and all human valuables are as the dust of the earth in his sight. The infliction of a penalty and its time of completion are certain. The “fire” of his jealousy describes the fierceness of Jehovah’s indignation as that of a husband against an unfaithful wife. The wrath of Jehovah shall flame so as utterly to destroy the “land.” This destruction shall proceed from Jerusalem unto every part of the land of Judah. It is near and very terrible. The second clause announces the completeness and severity of the coming judgment. Many expositors interpret the word “land” so as to include the whole earth.

CHAPTER SECOND.

V. EXHORTATION TO ESCAPE WRATH BY REPENTANCE. VS. 1-7.

(FOR SUMMARY SEE P. 12)

VERSE 1—“*Gather yourselves, and gather, nation not ashamed.*”

The “nation” is here described by a participle which is translated by the Vulgate, Calvin, Jerome and others “non amabilis.” If this translation be correct, it suggests the thought that the nation is not practicing the law of Jehovah and is therefore not lovely. The interpretation “not ashamed” is more generally adopted and more probably correct. They ought to be ashamed since they neglected so many duties and violated so many laws. This interpretation is given by Schaff, Keil and Delitzsch, George Adam Smith, Nowack and Orelli. The prophet calls upon the Jews in view of this characteristic to assemble themselves before God in order that they may unitedly endeavor to secure his favor and return to his service. The first two verbs are derived from the same root and are both in the plural number. The first is in the Hithpael and the second in the Qal. The nation is not addressed as a unit but as composed of separate individuals each of whom must do for himself what will prepare him to meet the Lord, and do it earnestly. They must gather together as penitents though now unabashed or not ashamed.

VERSE 2—“*Before the bringing forth of a decree, a day as chaff passes over, before there shall not come upon you the fierceness of the wrath of Yahweh; before there shall not come upon you a day of the anger of Yahweh.*”

The reason for assuming the posture of the humble penitent is that they may meet great and impending danger. The coming catastrophe is introduced by the word “before”

in each of the three clauses which implies that the necessary preparation must be made before the judgement comes or not at all. The judgement is described as the child of a "decree" because it is the fulfilment, the result, the consummation of a purpose which has ordained the punishment of sin. The decree is the expression of sovereign authority, unchangeable, irresistible and self-producing. The accomplishment of the decree is described as a "*day*" pointing out the portion of time in which it shall be fulfilled. It is not a day of the week necessarily, but a period of time within which the work assigned to it shall be accomplished. When it comes it "passes over," it will come and go as rapidly as the chaff before the wind. Nothing can hinder its arrival, impede its progress or prevent its close. This day as it passes will exhibit the intensity of God's wrath against sin. Jehovah as the covenant God of Israel must punish the sinners, because they are his creatures and because they are his covenant people, and against them his anger is intense. The last clause repeats the declaration already made that Jehovah hates sin and has appointed a specified time for its punishment which will come soon. The repetition of these truths increases the force of the warning.

VERSE 3—"*Seek ye Yahweh, all humble of the land who have done his judgment. Seek righteousness; seek humility; perhaps ye shall be hid in a day of anger of Yahweh.*"

Special directions are here given to the faithful in Israel to "seek" Jehovah the very God against whom the nation had sinned and who alone can hide them in his hand when the day of trouble shall come. This they must do by appealing to him for help. This conduct had already shown its good fruit in their humility and obedience to the law of God. "'Judgment' in the sense of revealed statutes." (Cowles). Laying aside all spiritual pride, trusting in Jehovah, obeying his will, and submitting to his govern-

ment in the midst of their trouble, they must continue the same line of conduct and seek righteousness and humility. The enemies of Jehovah should certainly and suddenly be destroyed. Only one thing would protect any man from the terrible consequences of Jehovah's anger and that was to "be hid" in his hand. All who are thus hidden shall be pardoned and saved, (Keil and Delitzsch.) It is possible for Jehovah to shield the meek from his own anger. Jehovah never forgets, neglects or rejects his own.

VI. REASONS FOR PENITENT RIGHTEOUSNESS DRAWN FROM
FUTURE CONDITION OF THE NEIGHBORING
NATIONS. (Chap. 2 : 4-15.)

(FOR SUMMARY SEE P. 13)

(A) PHILISTIA, vs. 4-7.

VERSE 4—"For Gaza shall be forsaken and Ashkelon unto desolation: as for Ashdod, they shall drive her out at noon-day and Ekron shall be rooted up."

This verse assigns as a reason for penitent righteousness the fact that the cities of the Philistines shall be punished. Therefore they shall be incapable of rendering any help or comfort. The five principal cities of the Philistines were Gaza, Gath, Ekron, Ashdod and Ashkelon. Of these, four are here mentioned in order to show the condition of the country by its cities. The name of Gath is omitted perhaps on account of the parallelism. In Amos 1 : 8 and Zechariah 9 : 5 the same four cities are mentioned and Gath also omitted. Mighty as these had been they should feel the effects of subjection to a victorious enemy such as desertion, up-rooting, desolation and being driven out at "noonday," the usual time for rest and sleep in that climate. The declaration is more remarkable because of the instances of paronomasia to be found in the Hebrew text in the first and last clauses of the verse, thus: *Azzah*, *azubhah* and *Eqron te ager*.

Other reasons given by several authors for the expulsion of Ashdod at noonday are: 1st.—Because noonday is the time when men attend more to their affairs or engage in battle; or 2d.—Because noonday would be more inconvenient to those making a journey (Drusius.) 3rd.—Force in open day may be meant; or greater degree of distress and disgrace on account of public expulsion in the heat of the day (Newcome.) 4th.—With open violence—(Jerome, Kinchi.) 5th.—Unexpected and unsuspected expulsion (Cölln, Rosenmüller.) 6th.—This will exhibit their courage and the needlessness of strategem by night (Keil and Delitzsch). Ashdod was the seat of the worship of Dagon. Undefended they shall drive her out at noonday.

VERSE 5—“*Woe, inhabitants of the tract of the sea, Nation of Cherethim! Yahweh's word is against you, Canaan land of Philistines, and I have caused thee to perish so that there be no inhabitant.*”

The initial interjection announces the punishment soon to come upon the remnant of the Canaanites who occupied the tract of country between Israel and the Mediterranean sea. They are first said to be a nation of the “Cherethim.” Many modern interpreters translate this word “The Cretans” (the Vulgate, *gens perditorum*) and trace the origin of the Philistines to the island of Crete. They are secondly called “Canaan.” This name was originally given to the whole land of Palestine which was the dwelling place of the Canaanites. It may also apply to a limited region of the sea coast still inhabited by Canaanites and Pelethites after the captivity of the land by the Israelites. It is thirdly, called “land of Philistines” which is supposed to describe them as emigrants and founders of the five great cities, Gaza, Gath, Ekron, Ashkelon and Ashdod. Moses and Amos record the fact that they were descendants of the Caphtorim (Deut. 2: 23, Gen. 10: 14 and Amos 9: 7.) The

word of the Lord is upon the inhabitants of this territory, therefore their punishment will be speedy and great.

VERSE 6—*“And the tract of the sea be pastures, cisterns of shepherds and folds of a flock.”*

The work of punishment shall not only reach the great cities of Philistia, but the very dwellings of the inhabitants shall be of an inferior character and testify at once to the fact that they are the dwellings of a nomadic population. Keil renders the word for “cisterns” pits to protect the shepherd from the heat of the sun.

VERSE 7—*“And become a tract for a remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed upon them; in the houses of Ashkelon in the evening they shall lie down for Yahweh their God shall visit them and turn away their captivity.”*

A remnant shall be left of the house of Judah after it shall be conquered and its population taken captive by the Chaldeans. They shall possess the tract previously described which will furnish them with the pastures mentioned in verse 6. In the clause “they shall feed upon them,” the subject of the verb represents the remnant of Judah which is a noun of multitude. The act attributed to them is that of caring for their flocks by leading, feeding, healing and defending them. This shall be done upon the pastures which compose the tract of country here referred to and not upon the seas, as many suppose. Where the cities of Philistia stood, which once governed and protected the land, the shepherds and their flocks shall lie down to obtain their necessary rest. This is an indication of the complete subjugation of the land as it would have been impossible for shepherds and flocks to lie down in the streets of Ashkelon prior to its desolation. The word “visit,” which sometimes expresses the idea of punishment, is here used in the sense of blessing—*bono sensu*. His favor shall extend so far also as to remove the evils of “their captivity.”

(B) MOAB AND AMMON, vs. 8-11.

VERSE 8—*“I have heard reproach of Moab and revilings of the sons of Ammon who have reproached my people and behaved haughtily upon their border.”*

Next in the list of nations that share in the punishment of Israel, Jehovah who is the speaker, here introduces Moab and Ammon and defines their sins. These nations were the descendants of Lot, Gen. 19: 30-38, and originally inhabited the territory east of the Dead Sea and Jordan and between the Arnon and the Jabbok. They were expelled from the northern part of this region, before the exodus from Egypt, by the Amorites through whose territory the Israelites passed into the land of Canaan. The Israelites afterwards conquered this portion of country and it was occupied by the tribes of Reuben and Gad. These nations never sought to maintain friendly relations with Israel; but, on the other hand, lost no opportunity of uttering “reproach” against them, (Jer. 48: 27 and 49: 1; Ezek. 25: 3, 6, 8) or of doing them an injury. This was exhibited in their many incursions into the land of Canaan, (Judges 3: 12; 10: 7-9; 11: 4-33; I Sam 11: 1, II Sam 10-12.) David conquered Ammon (II Sam 12: 2-11.) The Moabites and Ammonites, with others, made an incursion in the reign of Jehoshaphat, (II Chron. 20). Pillaging bands made incursions into Palestine, (II Kings 13: 20). This opposition is exhibited not only in their war-like invasions but in their disposition.

VERSE 9.—*“Therefore, I living, (a saying of Yahweh of hosts, God of Israel), surely Moab shall be as Sodom and the sons of Ammon as Gomorrah, a possession of the nettle and a pit of salt and a desolation unto eternity. A remnant of my people shall spoil them and a remainder of people shall possess them.”*

“I living,” the prophet here pledges the very ex-

istence of Jehovah to the accomplishment of his purpose, (see Heb. 6.13). He in whose name the prophet speaks is "Yahweh, (Jehovah) of hosts," the infinite and eternal God, who reigns over every order of creation, of which his "hosts" are composed. He holds a special relation to "Israel" as their covenant God, who in his faithfulness will fulfill every promise he has made to his people. His very life is involved in the fulfilment of his words. Because "Moab" and the "Sons of Ammon" have magnified themselves against Israel, so sure as Jehovah lives, he will punish them with total destruction, such as was visited upon "Sodom" and "Gomorrhah," than which man can imagine nothing more terrible, (Gen. 19). The fulfilment of this prophecy was inaugurated by the invasion of Nebuchadnezzar, and continued by others, including Judas Maccabæus, until the land became a complete "desolation." This is described as consisting in the sterility of the land, which being uncultivated can bring forth only the "nettle," (Job 30: 7) or be only employed as a "pit of salt," (Dent. 29: 22), and shall be perpetual.—The third element in their punishment is that "Judah," though he be but a "remnant," shall spoil them and possess their territory. The remnant includes those who went into Philistia (v. 7), those who remained in Judah (II Kings 24: 14; 25:12), and those who returned from the Babylonish captivity (Ezra, Chap. 2).—The word "remainder," which is a poetical repetition of the word remnant, renders the probable inability of Israel more emphatic. Jehovah shall be on the side of Judah and shall bring Moab and Ammon into entire subjection to them.

VERSE 10—" *This (shall be) to them for their pride because they boasted and magnified themselves against the people of Yahweh of Hosts.*"

This verse gives the reason why Moab and Ammon

have been so treated by the Lord of Hosts. Jehovah is sovereign over all his creatures. The pride of Moab and Ammon had been exhibited in their behavior towards Israel (Is. 16:6; Jer. 48:27 and 49: 1; Ezek. 25: 3, 6, 8). They "boasted and magnified" themselves against the people of Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel. Whatever is done for or against this people is done unto him. (Matt. 25:40-45). Providence not only brought them under the dominion of Babylon but by sending successive inflictions upon them and their land finally destroyed them as nations from the face of the earth (Prov. 16: 18, I Pet. 5:5, Ps. 147: 6).

VERSE 11.—"*Yahweh (shall be) fearful unto them for he hath wasted all the gods of the earth, and they shall bow down unto him, man from his place, all islands of the Nations.*"

Jehovah will be "fearful" to Moab and Ammon, and will exercise his sovereign authority and almighty power in sending upon them great trouble. The pronoun "them," which designates the object of punishment is not intended to represent the nations of the earth, but Moab and Ammon, because they must share in the threatened overthrow of the "gods of the earth," which shall be the strangest element in their punishment.—"He hath wasted." This punishment shall resemble a famine which would prevent the needful preparation of sacrifices. These were to the gods both propitiation for sin and material for food. The consequences of such treatment would be increasing debility and approaching dissolution.—The ruin of the idols will itself impel men "to bow down unto him," to worship the true God. The kingdom of Jehovah shall certainly be established and his worship prevail throughout all "the nations" of the earth. This change shall be so thorough that every one shall from his own

“place” render acceptable worship to him. God’s covenant includes every living nation, even where separated from the lands of Israel by the waves of the sea, described here as “all islands of the nations.”

THE FUTURE OF CUSH. V. 12.

VERSE 12—“*Also, ye Cushites, slain of my sword shall ye be.*”

The future tense is used in the translation of this verse on account of its relation to the preceding prophecy. “The Cushites” were a nation occupying the territory south of Egypt. Some suppose them to include a portion of the inhabitants of Arabia (see commentary on Hab. 3:7.) Stier and Theile translate Cush by “Moors,” while DeWette has “Aethiopians.” They came but little in conflict with Israel and Judah, but the prophet here announces their subjugation and punishment by the “sword” of Jehovah, which is sharp, strong and long. The nations who are the instrument of their punishment are here described as the sword of Jehovah. His wisdom power and faithfulness ensure the fulfilment alike of his promises and threatenings. (See also note on 3: 10).

THE PUNISHMENT OF ASSYRIA.

(FOR SUMMARY SEE INTRODUCTION P. 5.)

VERSE 13—“*And he shall stretch forth his hand upon the north and destroy—to wit—Asshur. And he shall make—to wit—Nineveh unto a desolation, dryness like a wilderness.*”

The Assyrians are here introduced immediately after the Cushites, in order to express the idea that the whole region between these two nations should be subject to God’s judgements. In carrying on the work of punishment Jehovah will exert all needed power and his outstretched hand shall control the whole “North.” He will destroy

"Asshur" [Assyria,] the central figure among the northern powers. He will make Nineveh, the central figure of Assyria, a "desolation," dry and barren as a desert though settled in a well-watered region on the banks of the Tigris. It was but a little while until Nebuchadnezzar conquered the nation and made Babylon his metropolis, (see "Layard's Nineveh," vol. 1:121,) and the ancient site of Nineveh has only been recently identified.

VERSE 14—"*And flocks shall lie down in the midst of her, every living thing of a nation. Also pelican, also porcupine shall lodge in her capitals; a voice sang in the window, desolation in the threshold for cedarwork is uncovered.*"

"Flocks" shall lie down in the midst of the city formerly inhabited by men. Beasts of every kind shall wander unresisted. Birds of prey and quadrupeds like the porcupine, shall find a footing in the "capitals" of her ruined homes and palaces, whether still occupying their original place or having fallen in ruins to the ground. The word translated "pelican" is derived from a word signifying to vomit and describes a bird which inhabits marshy places and vomits its food. "The porcupine" represents a class of quadrupeds whose presence is a token of desolation.—The cries of carnivorous birds shall be heard in the "windows"—or as some think the moaning of tempest shall be heard there,—"desolation" shall mark the threshold and cedar-work be uncovered. These things are all signs of the devastation of a land abundantly inhabited and well cultivated.

VERSE 15—"*Is this the city, the exulting one, the one dwelling in confidence; the one saying in her heart, I am and the end is yet. How has she become a desolation, a lying down place for beast! Everyone passing over her shall hiss, shall wag his hand.*"

Jerome interprets the first clause as prophetic irony, but to translate it as a question presents more forcibly the intended contrast between the present condition of Nineveh and its future fall. Now the great capital city of Assyria, exulting in its size, sovereign in its resources, she dwells without apprehension of reverse as though conscious of her invincibility, and indulges in hearty self-laudation; she claims supreme sovereignty and boasts of her impregnability in these words: "I am and my end is yet," that is, my limit is yet unattained. Some regard the word translated "end" as a preposition followed by a pronominal suffix and thus signifying "without me" This phrase is then rendered: "I am and there is none besides me;" but a negative must be supplied to make this a possible translation. It is preferable to regard this word as a noun followed by a suffix and meaning "my end." The city desires to say, "I stand supreme, my extremity is yet," that is, no signs of my fall can be seen. She thus describes the supremacy, extent and duration of her empire. The contrast with this previous prosperity is described by the announcement—(1) of her complete "desolation." This insures the overthrow of the city and the destruction of its buildings. Its walls shall be broken down, its temples, palaces and homes shall become a mass of ruins. (2) In place of its previous population the city shall be a couching place for all living animals whether wild or domestic. This is indicated by the use of a noun of multitude in the clause. (3) The future traveller over the site shall manifest his astonishment and contempt as well as his approbation of her punishment by the acts of hissing and wagging his hand. He now despises the once glorious Nineveh because of its utter ruin and its inability to regain its sovereignty. He wags his hand as though he would say "Away with her for she deserves her punishment."

CHAPTER THIRD.

VII. JERUSALEM EXHORTED. THE TRUE ISRAEL
ENCOURAGED.

Jerusalem still sinful even in its highest officers shall be punished; it is exhorted to wait upon Jehovah who will care for his penitent and widely dispersed suppliants. He will remove all shame from Judah and give to his own people all needed grace. Therefore, let Judah rejoice both because of evils removed and grace bestowed, for Jehovah will relieve the distressed and restore the captive.

A. THE REBUKE. 3: 1-7.

(SEE INTRODUCTION P. 5.)

VERSE 1—“*Woe rebellious and polluted (one); the oppressing city.*”

The word “woe” suggests the coming of a horrible judgement which shall fall upon Jerusalem, as itself a sinful city, and also as the capital of a wicked land. All the land of Israel is consequently interested in the future of the city. In the kingdom of God there is an unfailing connection between sin and punishment. The two reasons here assigned for this threatening are: (1) The disobedience of Jerusalem to her sovereign Lord, opposed to God and disposed to evil. (2) She also employs her power in acts of oppression upon her subjects and neighbors. We are here reminded of Christ’s address to the Jews, Matt. 23.25-28.

In verses 2-4 inclusive the characteristics ascribed to the city in verse 1 are expounded and confirmed.

VERSE 2—“*She listened not to the voice, she received not correction. She trusted not to Yahweh, she drew not near to her God.*”

The prophet describes here the past progress of Judah in sin, and her present condition. Each clause marks a separate step in her history. (1) She disregarded “the voice”

of Jehovah. He speaks by his own voice, by his providences and by the utterances of inspired men. (2) She accepts not "correction" or discipline. Because she did not listen she did not and could not improve the chastisement of Jehovah. (3) She "trusted not" in Jehovah, the only true God and her God, the only one able to help. Her estrangement from God both exhibited and increased her lack of faith. (4) "She drew not near to her God;" (who was the proper object of worship and the giver of all good,) by rejecting the means of grace and refusing the requisite obedience to his law. This description characterizes the whole nation which was so thoroughly depraved that but few of the people of God remained true to him within her limits.

VERSE 3—"*Her princes in the midst of her are roaring lions, her judges are evening wolves, they reserve not to morning.*"

Two classes of transgressors are mentioned here as dreadful sinners, who behave themselves just contrary to their official obligations in matters of civil government. Her "princes" are loud and boisterous in their demands and threatenings and disposed to use their power in acts of oppression and injustice. Her "judges" who ought to be right in their lives and just in their decisions, do what injury they can to their neighbors secretly and "reserve nothing till morning." As wolves come forth at evening to secure their prey and devour it so entirely as to leave nothing till morning; so these men seek to gratify their appetites fully by injustice while they try to escape the notice of men and avoid the punishment of their iniquities.

VERSE 4—"*Her prophets are light, men of deceits; her priests have profaned holiness, they have dishonored the law.*"

Two classes of ecclesiastical officers are here described as contributing to the prevailing iniquity.—Her “prophets,” who ought to be impressed with the gravity of their commission, and honest in the performance of their duties, are light and deceitful.—The “priests” who ought to have revered all that was holy and obeyed the law, profaned that which is holy and disobeyed the law.

The holiness which belongs to God consecrates his people, his sanctuary, his services, his ministry and his law. So that sinners may pollute the name of Jehovah not only by neglecting the reverence due to God, but by defiling that which is consecrated to him. Orelli thinks that the minority of Josiah is one of the principal causes of this state of affairs.

The following verses, 5–7 inclusive, describe the mode in which Jehovah deals with sinful nations and especially the manner in which he has dealt with Judah, though this punishment has proved ineffective.

VERSE 5—*“Righteous Yahweh in her midst will not do iniquity. Morning by morning he will give his judgement to light ; he faileth not, and the unjust knoweth not shame.”*

This verse continues the description of Judah as not yet abandoned by Jehovah who is a merciful, holy and just sovereign. In the Hebrew there is no article in the first phrase. The noun “Yahweh” (Jehovah) precedes the adjective translated “righteous.” By this arrangement the attention of the reader is especially directed to the essential righteousness of Jehovah. He differs from all who have been described in the preceding verses. While they are sinful he is in perfect accord with his own law and he will certainly fulfil the promises and threats contained in his word.—Possessing this character he dwells constantly in the “midst” of Jerusalem, the capital city of

Judah, and consequently takes cognizance of the sins of his professed followers and shows favor to all the righteous. He is "in the midst" both in visible presence in the temple and in divine omnipresence. All men are under his eye, subject to his authority and bound to render their account to him.—The repetition of the words "morning by morning," conveys the idea that the judgement of the Lord is unfailing. Though the wicked are like wolves of evening yet morning by morning, day after day, he exhibits his holiness, wisdom, justice, goodness and truth. The evidence of his presence and his covenant relation to Israel never fail.—In spite of all this the unrighteous are shameless though the professing people of God and furnished with his law, his worship and his loving kindness.

VERSE 6—"*I have cut off nations, their defences have been devastated, I have laid waste their highways (to be) without one passing by; their cities are destroyed, (to be) without a man, without an inhabitant.*"

The prophet here utters the words of Jehovah in the first person in order to impress his hearers with the truth that what Jehovah says he is able to perform.—He will certainly punish sin, in the future as in the past, in "nations" as in individuals. No combination of nations had ever been able to resist his will or escape his wrath unharmed. The following clauses exhibit the thoroughness with which Jehovah has fulfilled his unfailing judgements in the past and confirm his purpose to deal with men according to their deserts (see Isaiah 36: 18, 20).—The word translated "defences" signifies originally corner stones, which are the most important elements in the construction of a wall or tower. It here includes all that the nation had depended upon to protect them in time of invasion, these are all rendered useless.—"Highways"

refer not to the streets of one or all of their cities, but to the great roads used for travel through the nations. They are made useless so that none pass over them. "Their cities" have been so utterly overthrown that there is no man to be found there, they are entirely uninhabited.

VERSE 7—*"I said, Surely thou shalt fear even me, thou shalt receive instruction; and her dwelling shall not be cut off. All which I have visited upon her; but they rose up early, they corrupted all their doings."*

God is here represented as speaking in his own person. He describes the contrast between his own dealings with them and their continued disobedience. God, as our sovereign, speaks to us in many ways,—by his spirit, his written and spoken word and signs. He demands of all nations the fear of God and the recognition of his right to teach. His providential fulfilment of promise or blessing shall proclaim the same principles of truth, which heretofore he had used in his own time and way. He had taken pains to make nations, and especially his chosen people, know their duty, and thus endeavored to prevent their destruction. If they obeyed, "her dwelling," the land in which the nation dwelt, should not be cut off.—They had already experienced both the blessings and penalties of his law in their previous history. In spite of God's mercy and authority, and their own experience, men "rose up early" to do wrong, they availed themselves of every opportunity to disobey his law, they made their deeds worse than they were before, and brought upon themselves greater condemnation.

B. THE SUMMONS. 3: 8-10.

VERSE 8—*"Therefore wait ye upon me,—a saying of Yahweh,—until the day of my rising up to prey, for my judgement is to gather nations unto my assembling. King-*

doms, to pour out upon them my wrath,—even all my fierce anger. All the earth shall be destroyed with the fire of my jealousy.”

The injunction with which this verse commences has a special reference to its origin in the mind of Jehovah. It comes by his authority, it is uttered by his messenger and contains his rule of duty. Strange as that rule may seem to them, expecting some counsel specially adapted to their peculiar circumstances. God urges all to “wait upon” him, because he will certainly punish the enemies of his people.—The actual facts of history showed that the surrounding nations would themselves reach the consummation of God’s judgement. This has since come to pass in the case of Chaldeans and the Romans. This is the law of action, which has been given by Jehovah to men time and again; the servants of a king must obey his will and not the will of others, they must also expect the fulfilment of his promises and threatenings and they must endure to the end. The call to service does not possess the tinge of irony which some interpreters give it, but is an intimation of Jehovah’s sovereignty, he will defend his throne and punish his enemies.—The day of punishment is as fearful as the assault of a wild beast upon his “prey,” when, hidden from sight, he leaps with sudden, irresistible and deadly power. So Jehovah in his own time metes out his punishment. His servants shall not be numbered among his enemies. Some adopt the translation “witness” instead of “prey” and regard the figure to be that of Jehovah’s rising up before the assembled court in order to testify against the nations. But this is not sustained by the following description.—The reason why Jehovah will do this is because his infinite mind has made “judgement,” which is the expression of his justice and must be executed.—He intends to gather all “the nations” with their rulers, that he may

“pour out” his wrath, as though it were oil poured upon their heads.—“The whole earth” must be consumed by the “fire” of God’s indignation. As the fire devours all, sparing neither field nor forest, so will God punish all who are in rebellion (Joel 3 : 12).

VERSE 9—*“For then I will turn to peoples a lip purified, to call all of them in the name Yahweh, to serve him with one shoulder.”*

The reason is now assigned why they should serve Jehovah. The development of the purpose and way of the Lord is peculiar. He will “turn to” them “a lip purified,” as in 1 Sam. 10 : 9 “turn” is used for “give.” The “lip” is the external and visible organ of speech and represents all the organs and methods of utterance. An impure lip would represent uncleanness of utterance and a pure lip must, on the contrary, describe the utterance which proceeds from a purified heart.—He will not gather the nations into his kingdom by the sword, but by the utterance of pure words. The lips that speak them are those that preach the gospel, such as prophets, apostles, ministers and individuals who proclaim the word of the Lord. Sin is an uncleanness, it affects both the members of the body and the powers of the mind. The grace of God will deliver these powers and members, and employ them in his service, though they have been hitherto misused.

The design of Jehovah in turning to all nations is to “call all of them” by the authority of Jehovah himself to serve him “with one shoulder.” The recognition of his sovereignty must be shown by serving him unanimously, earnestly and constantly. The words “with one shoulder,” are understood by different commentators to be suggested either (1) by the march of soldiers who move along shoulder to shoulder, or (2) by the assistance which laborers render

to one another when carrying a burden, or (3) by the yoke for oxen, which unites them in drawing their load. (Isa. 49: 14-15).

VERSE 10.—“*From beyond the rivers of Cush, my suppliants, even the daughter of my dispersed, shall bring my meat offering.*”

This verse describes the immense distance from which the worshippers of Jehovah shall come to bring their offerings to him. “Cush” is supposed by Wahl to be Chusistan or Turan. (Gen. 2: 13). Bochart understands it to mean Ethiopia and the part of Arabia opposite. But most interpreters regard Cush as the name of an extensive country lying south of Egypt and extending an unknown distance into the continent of Africa. It was regarded by the Israelites as the uttermost southern limit of the known world. The name of Ethiopia has usually been employed as a synonym of Cush and with limits equally undefined. Many later writers think that Abyssinia corresponds to the ancient Cush. “The rivers of Cush” would then be the upper Nile, Astapus, Astaboras and Astasobas. These were mentioned by Strabo as rivers of Meroe, but they have not been identified either as branches of the Nile, or as independent streams south of Abyssinia. Jehovah describes the suppliants coming from the distant south, in other words, from the end of the known world. (2: 12; Psa. 68:31). These are not the only “suppliants” that shall recognize and serve Jehovah, but all the other nations of the earth shall pursue the same line of conduct. Those who come shall be “suppliants” because they submit to Jehovah, and seek his blessing.—“The daughter of my (Jehovah’s) dispersed” is the church. God’s people have been dispersed by his providential dealings in the days of Shalmanezzer, Nebuchadnezzar and also in the days

of the Roman conquest of Judah. These dispersed ones in various generations, under the influence of the gospel, return to Judah bringing with them their "meat offering." While there shall be no special gift of the meat offering as commanded by the Mosaic Law, yet all who are born again shall give to God their hearts, their bodies, their lives, their property, their labor and their influence.

C. PROMISES OF GRACE AND DELIVERANCE. 3: 11-15.

VERSE 11—"*On that day thou shalt not be ashamed of all thy doings by which thou hast transgressed against me. For then I will remove from the midst of thee the exultants of thy pride, thou shalt not continue to be haughty upon the mountain of my holiness.*"

The remaining sections of this chapter are all introduced by the words "in that day" or "in that time." (See vers. 11, 16, 19, 20).

"That day," describes the time in which Israel shall be freed from all shame which has rested upon her on account of past misdeeds. This applies to the Israel which is gathered together from the dispersion, called v. 14 "daughter of Zion." One of the peculiarities of the coming church is freedom from the shame of past sin (Ezra 9: 6, Ezek. 16: 52, Luke 16: 11-20, Luke 18: 13). Sin is followed by shame because we are the subjects of God's government, recipients of his loving kindness, the objects of his providential care. Israel should be ashamed to sin, yet their transgressions were frequent and demanded punishment. A man is what his deeds express to the world around him. Man cannot remove that disgrace which is the necessary consequence of sin, but when the Lord's time of grace shall come, his peoples' past transgressions shall be no more remembered against them. (Isa. 54: 4-5, Ezek. 16:52). Their past sins shall be forgotten in their present

glory. (Psa. 32: 1, 2; 18:39, Rom. 8: 1). This result shall be accomplished by Jehovah himself by removing "the exultants" of thy pride. All who exult in any service but that of Christ shall be removed by God from their position and influence in the midst of Israel. The people shall be freed from their "pride" in Moriah which is the "mountain" of God's holiness, the central point of his visible kingdom.

VERSE 12—*"And leave in the midst of thee a people, afflicted and poor, and they trust in the name of Yahweh."*

Jehovah's kindness, which was displayed in the taking away the self-righteous, shall also be exhibited in leaving in Israel, or the church, a people characterized by endurance of affliction both public and private, and by their poverty, (2 Kings 24: 12). God frequently uses such afflictions as means of grace.—They shall "trust in the name of Yahweh (Jehovah)," to trust in the name of any one is to trust in his person, his perfections, his promises and his deeds. The name Yahweh (Jehovah,) belongs alone to the Covenant God of Israel. So faith in Jesus Christ unites men to him and secures their righteousness, government, instruction, sanctification, resurrection and salvation. Mark the strong contrast between the proud and haughty of the preceding verse and their exultation in the temple in the mountain of his holiness, and the trust of the poor and afflicted people in the name of Jehovah in this verse. God shall continue these providential dealings, according to his own will so as to accomplish the entire salvation of the world. Then nations shall not lift up sword against nations, neither shall they learn war any more.

VERSE 13—*"The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak a lie, nor shall a tongue of deceit be found in*

their mouths, for they shall feed and lie down and none terrifying."

Though the Lord's people suffer great affliction because of sin, yet the remainder of Israel, the true people of God, shall do no iniquity. This is the remnant according to the election of grace. (Rom. 11: 5.) This describes the true church under both the Israelitish and Christian dispensations. It is a holy church, holy not because of perfect sanctification; but one in which the members are renewed in the inner man and are enabled more and more to die unto sin and live unto righteousness. Further, they shall speak the truth in public and private, they shall not indulge in deceit, though a lying tongue be such a common possession of humanity. Each sheep shall be under the care of the good shepherd, and the whole flock lie down to rest in his chosen pastures.—He will give them courage, protect them from all enemies and shield them from evil. (Lev. 26: 5, 6, Isa. 17: 2, Jer. 30: 10, Miach. 4: 1, 4).

VERSE 14—*"Exult, daughter of Zion! and shout ye Israel! rejoice and be glad in every heart, daughter of Jerusalem!"*

The land inhabited by the chosen of God furnishes many terms by which the church of God is described. "Zion" was the resting place of Jehovah among his people. The "daughter of Zion," the Old Testament church, is the true church of God. Israel represents the church as a prince who has power with God. (Gen. 32: 28). God rules in the capital and because he rules, "the daughter of Jerusalem" will abide with him in the earthly city and is destined to a permanent home in the heavenly city.—In view of these relations, and what God has done and will do for them in the conversion of the whole world, their gladness must be expressed in every way, so that others may be

lead to accept the offered grace of God. The work of exultation must engage the whole heart of the remnant of Israel. The next verse presents the reason why they should exult in Jehovah.

VERSE 15—*“Yahweh has removed thy judgments, he has cleared away thine enemy, the king of Israel, Yahweh is in the midst of thee, thou shalt not see evil man.”*

The happy condition of Israel has originated in the grace of God: (1) Jehovah, the covenant God of Israel, is a just God, and by his “judgments” punishes sin. The same wisdom and power which sends his judgments can remove them and will continue to do so. (2) Though he permitted an enemy to appear against Israel, in his own time and way he removed him.—Many interpreters and some ancient versions read the word “enemies” instead of “enemy,” but the word is usually interpreted in the singular, which then includes all Israel’s foes, whosoever they may be. (3) Israel’s prosperity is certain because Jehovah is a great “king,” exhibiting, in the midst of the kingdom over which he rules, attributes which created intellects cannot grasp. (4) Evil shall consequently be banished from the kingdom of God. Nothing shall prevent the people of God from doing their appointed work, bearing their appointed sufferings and reaching their appointed home in the New Jerusalem.

D. COMFORT GIVEN. 3: 16-18.

VERSE 16—*In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem, Thou shalt not fear. Zion, thy hands shall not be slack.”*

When the Lord’s day of grace shall come, he will make the needful provision for it by proclaiming to the church its duties.—The church is here represented by “Jerusalem,” the capital city of God’s kingdom; which, with “Zion” as the seat of the king’s palace, is a witness of his wisdom,

power, love and grace.—This charge reaches all the church and includes the two commands, “fear not” and “let not thy hands be slack.” (1) “Fear not” because Jehovah is thine help. Neither thine own weakness nor the power of thine enemies shall injure thee. (2) “Let not thine hands be slack,” a charge to be diligent in the use of talents and to avoid idleness. (II Chron. 15: 7, Phil. 2: 12).

VERSE 17—“*Yahweh, thy God, in the midst of thee—mighty—will save, will rejoice over thee with gladness, will rest in his love, will exult over thee with rejoicing.*”

Jehovah will rejoice in the exercise of his power for the welfare of his people, and in the love which shall lead to their salvation. He holds a covenant relation to his church which he holds to no one else. He is the infinite, eternal and unchangeable one; the creator, preserver and redeemer, who does for his people what a father would do for his child.—His dwelling is in “the midst of them,” not only because his visible presence was in his temple and because he dwelt in the person of his Son; but because by his Spirit he dwells in every saved soul, dwelling there he exerts his might in their behalf. (Deut. 7: 21, and 10: 17).—By his might he will perform the divine work of salvation.—He will “rejoice” in this as the exhibition of his power. He “will rest in his love,” i. e. in the inspection of his loved ones and the joyful quiet arising therefrom. He both creates their unutterable happiness and rejoices in their acceptance of it.

VERSE 18—“*I will gather the penitent from the assembly; from thee they were; a burden against her, a reproach.*”

Jehovah continues to declare what he has done for his people. They are described here as “penitents,” sad and poor in spirits, an afflicted people, they live under the rod.

It seems as though they were suffering the penalty of the divine law, but really God is making all work together for the good of his own penitent ones, who are described as suppliants in verse 10.—He will gather them “from the assembly” or congregation of the nations, (see verse 8,) when all shall recognize them as professors of the faith in Christ. The church shall be one in this world including God’s suppliants and penitents and finally embrace the whole world.—The assembly (i. e. the nations of the world) were separated “from thee,” that is the church, having been “burden” upon her and a source of reproach to her.

E. FINAL PROMISES. 3: 19, 20.

VERSE 19—*“Behold me at that time dealing with all them that afflict thee, and I will preserve the halting and I will gather the dispersed and get them praise and a name in all the earth of their shame.”*

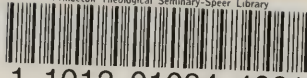
The description of the great work of Jehovah still is continued and special and earnest attention is directed to it, “Behold.”—Jehovah will come in personal contact with both his friends and enemies and use all appropriate methods to accomplish his will, “dealing” with all as they deserve.—The afflictions which they “that afflict” have laid upon the children of God shall be returned double upon their own heads; while God will sustain his church in every season of infirmity and bring her home to her own land, from which she had been expelled to become a pilgrim and a stranger. He will change their condition from evil to good in all the places where they have endured “shame.”

VERSE 20—*“At that time I will bring you, even in the time that I gather you, I will make you a name and a praise*

among all the people of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before your eyes said Yahweh."

The last element in the description of God's kingdom is the return of his people. The eternal king will suffer them to be taken away from their own land and accomplish it through the agency of many captivities. (II Chron. 33: 11, 36:6, II Kings 24: 2, II Chron. 36: 10, 17, II Kings 25: 6, Luke 3: 1, Matt 24: 9, 16, 17.)

Those thus dispersed among various nations were usually known by the name of the "captivity." He will give them a position of great honor and and praise among all nations. This honor will be due to Jehovah's interference in their behalf. All will know that the Kingdom of God has come when they see his people's captivity restored. The complete restoration of the Jews to their own land will be accomplished contemporaneously with the millenium and will be one of the most remarkable circumstances in the eyes of the whole church.



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